

FCC,

I've worked in media all my life; newspaper, radio and TV. I understand the financial hard times the industry is facing. I've seen them on the faces of co-workers and friends who lost their jobs and I felt them in my own wallet. I've listened carefully to station owners and consultants explain why mergers are necessary in today's marketplace. I know we can never return to the days when putting up an antenna was like planting a money tree.

One of the first things I remember learning in film school was the FCC's role in communications. As a young man disappointed with our government, the FCC came as a ray of hope. I learned about a commission that was committed to the long-term best interest of the American People. Here was a commission that made rulings based on equity, intelligence and forethought.

This winter I visited an independent radio station in California:KVMR. They told me it was one of only seven left in America. This station is extremely well supported in the community and despite the fact that all the on-air talent were volunteers, it served the community remarkably effectively. In a day in age when our sense of community is eroding and social ills are filling the void, now more than ever we need a media responsive to our needs , not the bottom line.

I've seen the tragic effects of mergers on the industry. Every reporter I've worked with genuinely cares about the community. However, as companies grow larger, their hands are increasingly tied, despite any new money or resources made available by the merger. Time and time again I've seen it happen: a slow erosion of rights, creativity, and programming that fits the community's needs.

I am certain the corporations have promised not to abuse any new powers granted. They always do. The sad fact, and forgive me if I wax philosophical, is that corporations can't make promises, they have no soul. In other words, they have no "word" to give.

If media companies are allowed more rights to merge the American People will not be served better. In every case I've seen the money the company saves through merger only goes to line the pockets of the company. It rarely goes to new equipment, and employees face lower salaries, and bigger workloads. The public will pay the price for "profitability." We will be faced with the lowest common denominator of journalism. Other programming will be a hollow shell of what it once was. Call it the Wal-martization of our media.

As a life-long writer, photographer, and broadcaster I implore you: Do not allow more mergers. I am willing to take a cut in pay to work for an industry that is worth working for. If need be we could even follow the example of KVMR in California. Volunteering to broadcast for a company and community I care about would be far better than getting a meager salary to work for a station that nobody likes but every one is forced to listen to.

Sincerely,

Dave Manning    formerly of WGVU, WNWJ, WYIN, KHGI, and KTVA

